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25th ANNIVERSARY
OF
TRURO BAPTIST CHURCH.

1808 ----- 1873.

BY A. C. PAGE, M. D.

At the celebration of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the formation of the Truro Prince Street Baptist Church, the following historical sketch of the Truro Baptists was read :]

The event of Sabbath, January 3rd, 1858—the day we celebrate—was one of great importance to the Baptists of Truro; of considerable importance to the denomination; and of some importance by its reflex action to Christians belonging to other denominations in the town. It was of great importance to the Baptists of this place, because it drew them closer together socially and in their church work. It gave them regular and more frequent privileges in connection with the ordinances of the church, and so identified them with the work of the denomination that they more fully realized their importance and responsibilities. It was of considerable importance to the denomination at large, because it established a new centre in a rapidly growing community, from whence it was reasonable to expect valuable assistance would come to the various schemes of the denomination, and it would become an "Anchor of Safety," so to speak, to Baptists belonging to other churches throughout the Province temporarily journeying here in connection with the educational institutions of the town. It was of some importance to other denominations, because, although their number was small at first, they undertook and successfully carried on such great things that other denominations first wondered, then admired, and finally to some extent stated their faith, zeal and generosity. In view of these facts—if facts they are—the enquiry naturally arises, Why was so important a work so long delayed? Why not sooner or later? And how did it all come about? To answer the last question first, it came about somewhat in this way:

In the year 1800 the Rev. Theodore S. Harding administered the ordinance of baptism by immersion in Onslow, for the first time anywhere in the Province of Halifax, to four persons, one of whom—and some authorities say he was the first of the four—was David Page, Senior. In 1803 Mr. Page moved with his family to Truro and the same year the ordinance was administered for the first time in the same way in Truro to his wife Jenny Page, and for some years theirs was the only Baptist family in the place. So much for a nucleus.

Mr. Page came to Truro just in time to render good service to the Baptist cause, in many ways, but particularly by his exertions on behalf of two missionaries sent by the Baptist Missionary Society of Massachusetts to these provinces. Henry Hale and Amos Allen, the missionaries alluded to, came to Truro in 1809 and stopped at the house of Mr. Page, and Mr. Hale preached there the evening of the day of their arrival. On the following day John Hunter came—apparently

in very bad temper and called Mr. Page sharply to account for allowing the strangers to preach such "dangerous doctrines," and threatened if they did not return immediately to the place from whence they came that he would have them arrested as spies. That afternoon one of them preached in Onslow and the day after Timothy Prout issued a warrant signed by Colonel Pearson, James Archibald and Matthew Archibald—also magistrates—for the arrest of the "Goye out into all the worlders." The warrant was served on them in Mr. Page's house and had he not become bound for their appearance they would have been cast into prison. Mr. Page saddled his horse—there was no carriage road between Truro and Halifax then—and rode to Halifax, and in a personal interview with the Governor, Sir George Provost, succeeded in getting a permit or license for Messrs. Hale and Allen to travel and preach through the province. The journey to Halifax and back, including his stay in Halifax, occupied five days. They remained preaching in Truro and vicinity for about two weeks, and during that time Mr. Prout—the magistrate who issued the warrant—opened his house to them for public preaching, and so popular did the "dangerous doctrines" become in little more than twenty years after, a Baptist place of worship was erected on the grounds of Mr. Prout.

After Mr. Page other Baptist families drifted along, until, in 1830, or thereabouts, there were on the Truro side of the line between Truro and Onslow, scattered all the way from the Upper Salmon River bridge to Black Rock, from twenty to thirty persons professing that faith and members of the Onslow Church. Although sufficiently numerous now apparently to establish a church they were scattered and not wealthy, and preferred to maintain their connection with their mother church in Onslow.

They commenced about this time, however, to talk of building a house of Worship and in a few years, by great sacrifices on their part and very generous assistance from other denominations, they had the satisfaction of opening for the service of God what was known for many years as the "Baptist Chapel" situated at the east end of the town, and since the building of the church on Prince Street converted into human dwellings. Previous to the opening of "The Chapel" any Baptist preaching in Truro was in the Court House or in private houses. Their regular weekly prayer meeting was, to use a Hibernianism, held monthly.

It was a weekly meeting but Truro was one of four stations, and got its turn once in four weeks. The other stations were at Philip Higgins' in Lower Onslow, the first house below the large brick house now occupied by David Mahon; at Alexander Upham's in Central Onslow, the late residence of the Rev. John I. Baxter, now the residence of Norman Griffin; and at Eben Blackmore's where his brother David now resides on North River. Their's was the only regular prayer meeting in the place for many years. In 1835 the year "the Chapel" was opened, seven of the sixteen persons added to the Onslow Church that year by baptism lived in Truro. Surely now, you say, with a comfortable and commodious house and rapidly increasing numbers a church will be formed in Truro. But no, the time has not yet come. The necessity for such a step does not appear too great and the attachment to the Onslow Church was very strong—so strong in fact with one good sister residing in Truro that she persistently declined to sever the connection even after her husband and children had gone and left her.

The Truro Section had now become, or rather had always been, an influential part of the Onslow Church, and were able to secure a part of the pastor's time, and kept up their weekly prayer meetings, and since 1840 a Sabbath School, and

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felt that they had sufficient accommodation, especially as the headquarters of the Onslow Church was within easy distance for those of them who kept horses, which at that time nearly every family did. Furthermore, Truro being on the direct line of travel from east to west and from north to south, they were often visited and ministered to by missionaries sent by the wealthy churches of the west to the more destitute (so far as Baptist teaching was concerned) regions of eastern Nova Scotia, Cape Breton and P. E. Island.

Missionary tours were taken in those days, not by inexperienced bashful boys during College vacation, but by the fathers of that time.

Manning, the Hardings, Joseph Dimock, Burton, Chipman, Harris, Tupper, Munro, McLaren and Stevens, are some among the many who on their way back and forth occupied the pulpit of the "Old Chapel," and through the distance they seem like giants, and I presume they were giants. They must have been made expressly for that work. They came as near, perhaps, to the standard of clerical perfection as it is possible for human beings to approach. They had sound minds in sound bodies. They were accustomed to toil with their hands and that gave them vigorous constitutions. They had no colleges to attend and consequently were strangers to brain fatigue and many vices associated with college life. They had not learned the fashionable custom of the present day of being "worn out," "run down" and "overworked" on two or three sermons a week. If they felt need of any change it was a change of raiment, or possibly a little circulating change for a pocket companion. They found rest and recreation in harder work and new fields of labor, and instead of flying away to foreign cities and coming back with their heads filled with new notions and introducing indolent and irreverent, if not unscriptural innovations, they put a few garments into their saddle bags, mounted their horses and started for a two or three months mission to eastern Nova Scotia, Cape Breton or P. E. Island. They would always arrange to preach in Truro going and returning, and there was some rivalry among the few Baptist families to see who could best entertain these holy men of God as they journeyed back and forth. The spare bed was kept in spotless order for them, and the warmest corner in the stable and the best grain in the granary were not too good for their horses. For twenty years then after the opening of the chapel they seemed no pressing need for a separate organization in the interests of the Truro Baptists, and the step might have been very injurious to the mother church in Onslow. About 1855, however, circumstances occurred calculated to have a marked effect on the growth and prosperity of Truro as a town. Rapid increase in numbers and wealth was about to take place, and of course the Baptists would have their share in the general "boom."

The Provincial Normal School had just been opened here, and a part of each year's pupils were Baptists. The Provincial Railways were in course of construction and there was a large influx of people to take up their residence here, and a fair per centage of the new comers would be Baptists, so that by the beginning of 1857, if not sooner, the aroma of coming events could be plainly discerned in the air. It occurred to one and another that circumstances were pointing towards, if not demanding, the consideration of the question of a Truro Church. Together with such thoughts would come the interests of the Onslow Church and the idea of separating was too painful to be dwelt upon. They remembered the many bright and beautiful summer Sunday mornings when in company with the brothers and sisters from North River, Onslow, Lower Onslow, Isigonish, DeBert River and Masstown they had met on that beautiful hill, affectionately called by

some "Zion's Hill," where until recently stood the grand square cold old Union Church, and after exchanging kind and affectionate greetings one with another, and enquiring lovingly for some absent sister or brother, they would compare notes about the general interests of Zion and taste some of her "thousand sacred sweets." But the months were not all summer months, and the mornings were not all sunny. North winds blew fiercely and storm clouds often lowered round "Zion's Hill," and bitter and cold were the wintry blasts, sharp and biting the keen frosts often encountered by the Truro Baptists in crossing the bleak marsh that lies between Truro and Onslow. It was not now, however, a question of cold mornings or sunny morning, nor yet a question of happy meetings or kind greetings. Sentiment must give way to progress. The interests of the denomination were greater than the interests of the Onslow or any other church, and no one saw more clearly the true situation than the Onslow people. When, however, the evident requirements of the times culminated in a proposal to the Onslow Church, in Conference in December, 1857, to dismiss their oldest deacon and forty-one others for the purpose of forming a church in Truro, the effect was touching and painful beyond description. Old men bowed their heads to hide their tears, while the aged sisters took no pains to hide their grief, but relieved their bursting hearts with sobs and sighs that plainly told what deep and cruel furrows were being ploughed through their tenderest affections. One brother as he looked upon the group that proposed leaving, asked that he too might be added to the number, for, although he lived in Onslow, it would be more convenient for him to attend in Truro. But the old deacon shook his head and answered No! No! brother, you are needed here more than in Truro and *duty not inclination or convenience* must actuate the Christian warrior. And that Christian warrior still stands firmly at his post as deacon in the Onslow Church.

Finally in spite of sobs and sighs and tears the vote was passed and a council appointed to meet in Truro on the second day of January, 1858, to consider calmly, dispassionately and no doubt prayerfully the propriety of the proposed step. When I tell you that that Council consisted of Rev. D. W. C. Dimock, John King, Esq., Thomas Soley, David Blair, Eben Blackmore and Robert Nelson, you will agree with me that no matter what their decision might be, it was guided by sound judgment and sanctified by the purest of intentions. The decision was unanimous in favor of the new organization, and on the following day, Sabbath, January 3rd, 1858, with solemn and appropriate ceremonies, David Page, Samuel Soley, Richard Upham, Chas. H. Blair, Francis Layton, Eben Hoar, John P. Moore, William Cummings, Isaac Blair, Asa Daniels, David C. Wilson, Daniel Eaton, Lyman J. Walker, Adam Johnson, Mercy H. Chambers, Elizabeth Upham, Nancy Cook, Catherine Linton, Elizabeth Hoar, Rebecca Archibald, Rebecca Archibald, junr., Hannah Miller, Margery Archibald, Ellen Blair, Martha Weatherby, Mary Ann Layton, Sarah Jane Johnson, Abby Brown, Lucy Brown, Nancy Soley, Elizabeth Eaton, Nancy Chambers, Helen Layton, Miriam Archibald, Lydia Logan, Leonora Blair, Miriam Daniel, Sarah Soley, Margaret Moore, Elizabeth Hall, Mary Delaney and Sarah Lynds were constituted a regular calvanistic close communion Baptist Church, and God grant that it may ever remain such, under the name of the "Truro Baptist Church."

On the same day Richard Upham was ordained deacon and David Page who had held the office in the Onslow Church was unanimously requested to continue in that service. Martha Faulkner and Rosanna Walker presented letters of dis-

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mission from their respective churches and received the right hand of fellowship, and with the dispensing of the communion, the day's proceedings closed.

In answering the question How? I think I have also answered the other. Why not sooner or later? I think I have shown that much sooner would have been premature, any later would have been almost criminal neglect.

This Church although so new and young was by no means composed of raw material. Its timbers were of live oak and well seasoned. Deacon Page had been forty years a church member and a great part of that time a deacon. Deacon Upham had been an active member of the Onslow Church from his youth. Charles H. Blair although youthful as to years was a veteran in church work, and was chosen for Clerk which office he held for ten years, and upon resigning received a vote of thanks from the church, which the new Clerks speak of in the minutes as a "well merited compliment."

The work of the various Committees was in the hands of tried men of experience and wisdom both in church and secular affairs, while there was enough of the youthful element in its composition to insure fire and zeal. William Cummings and Lyman J. Walker were of their number.

After choosing of officers and appointing Committees the first step taken was to ascertain what amount could be raised for ministerial labor for the year. At a church meeting held January 18th, 1858, it was announced that a sufficient sum was secured for a Pastor's salary for the year and it was immediately resolved that the Rev. D. W. C. Dimock, the pastor of the Onslow Church, be called to the new church. At some preliminary meetings to arrange details before the dismission was granted by the Onslow Church there was an agreement or understanding that Mr. Dimock was to have the pastoral care of both churches, but between the 4th and the 18th of January, he became convinced that from physical debility or some other cause he could not possibly undertake both, and as the agreement was not in writing, he was enabled to illustrate the fact hitherto largely if not universally doubted, that it was possible for God to call a minister from a higher to a lower salary and have the call accepted.

Mr. Dimock's salary in Onslow for 1857 was five hundred and forty dollars. (\$540.00), and in Truro for 1858 it was five hundred and twenty. But the Lord does not forget such servants and the next year the salary was increased by seventy dollars and gradually increased afterwards until in 1871 it was eight hundred, which for that time was considered a very respectable sum. Moral—Always seek for a lower salary.

By February 6th, 1858, one month after the organization, the church had chosen a pastor, elected officers, appointed all necessary committees, and was prepared for vigorous work in the various fields of Christian usefulness. One of its first acts was to place on the church records, after a suitable preamble, the following resolution on the subject of temperance:—

"*Resolved*, That we consider it incumbent upon ourselves individually, and upon others who may seek admission to this church, to abstain from the use of "intoxicating liquors as a beverage, and that we will not administer them as such "to others." No more treating among the brethren after that. Not long after, an equally creditable resolution was passed for assisting the poor, and that was good, for churches as well as individuals should remember that charity should begin at home, and that the soul or body of a Nova Scotian is worth just as much as the soul or body of the best heathen in India or China. The records of the

Church after the first year are somewhat monotonous with the exception of three or four years, when some "revival influence" seems to have resulted in large additions to the church roll by Baptism.

In 1858, the first year of its life, the number was thus increased by thirty-three. In May of that year the church met with a loss that draped the hearts of its members in deep mourning and grief, in the death of David C. Wilson, one of its most zealous and useful members. His last meeting with his brethren was in Conference, May 8th, and those who heard him on that occasion remarked his earnestness, humility and tenderness. He seemed even then to have got hold of the door-posts of the Eternal City he was so soon to inhabit.

At the next conference the following entry was made upon the church records, and I believe it only feebly expresses the deep sense of bereavement felt by the Church at that time:—

"Saturday, May 15th, 1858. Another week has passed away, and what a change has taken place in our small circle. Sorrow hath filled our hearts. Our beloved brother David C. Wilson, who took part with us in our exercises at the last Conference is now no more. His spirit is, we humbly trust, before the throne of God. His body has to-day been laid in the grave. He died May 13th, aged 39 years. How uncertain is life and how necessary it is to be prepared to meet our God. Our brother has left us and we shall see his face no more in our meetings here, but why should we despond? The Lord reigns let the earth be glad."

In 1868 twenty-seven, in 1869 thirteen, and in 1870, thirty were added by baptism. There was no year from 1858 to 1872 without some additions by baptism, although in 1865 and '66 there was but one in each year. Some of the Conversions in those scarce years were sufficiently remarkable to be worthy of record but the details would be too personal to justify introducing them in this paper so they will have to lie over for the future historian to deal with. I mentioned that in 1868 twenty-seven were added by baptism. Nine were added the same year by letter and as the additions had been up to this time, eighty-four by baptism and thirty-eight by letter, the old Chapel began to look too small. It was not only small, but antiquated. It had been in use over thirty years and was getting shabby. The most serious objection to it however was its location. On three sides of it were stony noisy streets and passing carriages disturbed (the slumbers of) the worshipers. Furthermore the principal part of the congregation lived further west so that even if the house was enlarged, repaired and modernized the leading objection would still remain; consequently, the feeling rapidly gained ground that the time had come to agitate for a new house. Any records of negotiations or preliminary transactions in the matter have been judiciously consigned to oblivion or are kept carefully concealed, for the first intimation extant that such a step was in contemplation was the appointment of a committee to purchase a site. A special meeting of the church was called for August 11th, 1868, to hear the report of that committee. They reported verbally that they had purchased land from Dr. D. B. Lynds on Prince Street. I have no knowledge of the price paid but I remember that an opinion prevailed at the time that the Dr. —intentionally—gave them very good terms, so favorable indeed that they sold a part for what the whole cost and had the Church let about free.

When the Committee had reported the purchase of a site William Faulkner, Esq., moved this resolution. "Resolved in the opinion of this meeting the time has ar-

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After full discussion the resolution passed unanimously and the following gentlemen were appointed a "Board of Commissioners" for building said house of worship—Deacon Richard Upham, William Faulkner, Esq., Isaac Blair, A. J. Walker and Cyrus Eaton. "The Board" procured plans which were submitted and adopted on the 25th of January, 1869, and by the 26th of Feby. following a contract had been made with Robert Brown for the erection of the new house. The work was promptly executed and when I tell you that some of the commissioners, particularly Deacon Upham, Isaac Blair and Cyrus Eaton spent nearly all their time looking after the construction you will have no doubt about the work being well done. It is but justice to the commissioners named to state that they gave their time to that work while it lasted without any remuneration except the thanks of the church which was formally tendered to them at a financial meeting held on the 12th of January, 1871, two of the members requesting that their names be recorded against the motion. On the last Sabbath of May, 1870, the new building was opened and formally dedicated to the worship of God at a cost to the congregation for building and furnishing of ten thousand dollars.

Four weeks previous to the opening of the new Church the choir, feeling some what modest—very properly—about occupying so important a position in so grand a building, and partly perhaps with the idea that they were doing something purely original, tendered through their leader their resignation. Contrary, however, to the general expectation, the church did not dismiss their pastor, lock up the church, sell the stove and other furniture and ask for their dismissal generally. Nor did they advertize for a trained Quartette at \$5.00 a Sunday apiece. Neither did they call a meeting of the church and propose congregational singing under the leadership of some brother who had never been endowed by nature with the gift of song. But they did a much more sensible thing than take any of the courses mentioned. They voted the choir have leave to go right on with their singing, (such as it was) as usual under the same leader *with power to add to their number*, and as every Baptist choir that had ever existed up to that time had probably had the same power without a vote of the Church, you can see what a lot they gained by resigning. Truly eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

One of the propositions with which I started this paper was that the move was of considerable importance to the denomination. To demonstrate the full advantage, even from a pecuniary stand point, would be almost impossible, but in this connection I may state that comparing the cash receipts for domestic and foreign missions alone as given in the Association minutes for the ten years previous to 1857 from the Onslow Church, with the ten following that year from the Onslow and Truro Churches, the yearly average shows an increase of nearly seventy-five per cent.

A moment now to glance at some of the changes that have taken place during the short life of this church with a year or two added. We had no railroads then and were only getting familiar with land lines of telegraph, no Atlantic cable, no union with Canada, no Winnipeg. Truro was one of the quietest country towns in the province with a population of from eight to twelve hundred, without a local paper. We had no Model School but we had a better High School than we have ever had since. We had no kerosene oil and those who dared not run the risk of being blown up with camphene had to put up with tallow candles.

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"The only streets in Truro were Prince and Queen Streets, called then "front and back street." The cross streets were called "lanes." The highways leading out of town were called "roads" and were better kept than they are now. The "Old Chapel" was for many years the only house of worship in town except the neat Episcopal Church that now makes such a nice meat market. Among the many other striking changes, I find in looking over the church records an appropriation of one hundred dollars a year for the sexton or janitor, and it carries me back to a time when a youth of my acquaintance used to cut the wood and haul it half a mile on his hand-sled to the Chapel, build the fires and perform such other work as was needed for the care of the house, such as lighting and sweeping, and all the pay he got was the privilege of snuffing the candles with his fingers: for in those days the old Chapel was lighted with tallow candles.

Before dismissing the "Old Chapel" finally, I want to tell of an incident in connection with it that will make every Baptist proud and may have some interest for the Presbyterians.

Although the house was built by and expressly for the Baptists other denominations contributed generously with the understanding that it would be open for them when such accommodation did not interfere with any Baptist appointment; and under that arrangement the Methodists occupied it regularly for some time previous to the building of the neat little church that formerly used to nestle so cosily under the willows on Prince Street by the side of the old mill-race. The willows are gone, the old mill-race is gone, and the house has been made into a house of merchandise since the building of the beautiful church on Pleasant Street, which has this advantage over all other churches in town, except the new West End Church, that it has no abomination in the shape of a bell. The incident to which I allude and of which I was ignorant till a few days ago, conferred upon the "Old Chapel" the honor of being the last church in which the late Rev. John Waddell addressed his people.

The story as told to me is that Dr. McCulloch was away and some stranger of his denomination was preaching in the morning in Onslow or North River and had made an appointment to preach in the Chapel in Truro, in the afternoon. The day was fine. The audience gathered, but the preacher did not come. The people were unwilling to separate without a service, so some of them went, and drew Mr. Waddell on his chair and little waggon to the door and carried him into the house. He gave out the psalm, prayed and took his text, but had not proceeded far with his sermon when the tardy brother arrived, and Mr. Waddell gave way for him. Many of the people said they were sorry the stranger came so soon for they loved to hear the voice of their dear old pastor once again.

The year that the choir resigned was a very prosperous one in other respects, 34 being added by Baptism.

During 1871 and 1872 the additions were small, in the former year only two, and during the latter, four.

At the close of 1872 Mr. Dimock resigned the pastorate and at a meeting in January, 1873, the Church voted him a donation of two hundred dollars. From January till May the supply was only temporary. In June, 1873, Mr. Gouche took charge of the shepherdless flock, and to his tender mercies I now resign you

